

Virginia MacKenny

Summary biography

Interested in painting, gender and deep ecology, Virginia MacKenny's artistic practice considers the powerful and yet tenuous relationships we hold with the environment around us. Juxtaposing seemingly random images within her signature blue spaces, her work offers an opportunity to consider the nature of perception, and the manner in which we internalize and consolidate the vast array of random symbols and images which we perceive and live with constantly. In depicting everyday objects and scenes set within a vast blue world connoting space or the deepest ocean, MacKenny endeavors to remind us of our position as but one small element in a vast and mysterious universe. The complexities and nuances of this relationship between personal self and universal other are played out in her unique blend of illusionism and abstraction.

MacKenny is an Associate Professor in Painting at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town and has received a number of awards including the *Volkscas Atelier Award* (1991) and the *Ampersand Fellowship, New York* (2004). She is an independent critic and curator and often selects for national art competitions. A contributor to Sophie Perryer's *10 Years 100 Artists – Art in a Democratic South Africa* (2004) she continues to write critically on contemporary South African art in journals and catalogues.

In 2011 MacKenny was the recipient of a GIPCA Award for research on environmentally concerned art practice in a Pan-African context. Her work has been featured in various survey exhibitions including *1910 – 2010: From Pierneef to Gugulective* (IZIKO South African National Gallery, 2010) and *Lie of the land: Representations of the South African Landscape* (Michaelis Collection, 2010).

More recent group exhibitions include *Believe Half of What You See and None of What You Hear* (Centre D'Art Contemporain Mulhouse, France, 2013); *Shimmering: Artists Unearth Light* (Cavalli Estate, 2013); *Paint Matters* (Barnard Gallery, 2014); *Picture and Paper* (Barnard Gallery, 2015); *Future / Present* (Barnard Gallery, 2016) and *Liminal Geographies* (Barnard, Cape Town, 2016). She has held solo shows in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg and her most recent exhibition *At Sand's Edge* was presented by Barnard in 2017.

MacKenny is represented in a number public collections in South Africa including IZIKO South African National Gallery and her work can be found in the corporate collections of Anglo-American, SASOL and SANLAM.